

Institut Européen des Jardins & Paysages

*Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes of England*

**Inventory of Great Britain**

FANHAMS HALL

Auteur(s) : Historic England <https://historicengland.org.uk/>

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*Inventory of Great Britain*  
**FANHAMS HALL**

Name: FANHAMS HALL

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Thundridge

County: Hertfordshire

District: East Hertfordshire (District Authority)

Parish: Wareside

label.localisation: Latitude: 51.822823  
Longitude: -0.012750984  
National Grid Reference: TL 37058 15667  
[Map: Download a full scale map \(PDF\)](#)

label.overview: Heritage Category: Park and Garden  
Grade: II  
List Entry Number: 1000172  
Date first listed: 11-Jun-1987

## Details

A country house with formal gardens of 1898-1901, and an extensive informal Japanese water garden of 1901-5.

### HISTORIC DEVELOPMENT

John Evans bought the Fanhams land in 1699, building Fanhams Hall c 1715, possibly incorporating elements of an earlier house of 1666. In 1859 the Hall was bought by a wealthy maltster of Ware whose daughter, married to Richard Benyon Page Croft, inherited much of his wealth. The house was substantially rebuilt for Croft from 1898 to 1901 in Jacobean style by the architect W Wood Bethell, who also laid out formal gardens around the house. A Japanese garden was laid out at a short distance from the house, 1901-5, by a Professor Suzuki, to designs by a Mr Inaka. An Austrian House was obtained from the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and erected in the Japanese Garden, together with two Japanese buildings.

In 1951 the estate was sold to the Westminster Bank as a Staff College, and sold on in 1971 to the Building Societies' Association who in turn sold it to J Sainsbury plc in February 1986. It is now (1999) used as a staff training centre.

### DESCRIPTION

**LOCATION, AREA, BOUNDARIES, LANDFORM, SETTING** Fanhams Hall lies 1.5km north-east of the centre of Ware, overlooking the River Rib valley below to the north. The c 9ha site is bounded to the south by Fanhams Hall Road, linking north Ware with Babbs Green and Helham Green to the east, to the west by a farm track giving access to Little Fanhams house, and on the other sides by agricultural land. The ground is largely level, with a slight slope down to the north-west. The setting is rural, with long, narrow views north from the Hall across the River Rib valley, and south-east across countryside from the south entrance. Poles Park (qv) lies 1.5km north-west in the valley below, together with Youngsbury (qv) 2km to the north.

The Japanese garden is comparable in date and character with the Japanese Garden at Bitchet Green, in Kent (qv), and that at The Garden House, Cottered, Hertfordshire (qv).

**ENTRANCES AND APPROACHES** The main approach enters off the Ware to Babbs Green lane, 150m south-east of the house, via an imposing gatehouse (W Wood Bethell 1901, listed grade II) which is set back off the road. The two-storey gatehouse, which straddles the drive, is faced with roughcast, with stone dressings, and has red-tiled roofs, pyramidal and particularly prominent on the two towers flanking the gateway. The gatehouse is flanked by stone wing walls which curve back to the roadside. From here the south drive, bordered by an avenue of young horse chestnuts, extends north-west through open lawn containing a few scattered park trees, until it reaches an oval pond lying adjacent to the south-east front of the house. The drive curves north-east past the pond, running alongside a single-storey, roughcast and stone screen range in which is set a gateway (W Wood Bethell 1901, gatehouse range listed grade II\* with the house), the whole being built in similar style to the entrance gateway. Here the drive turns west, through the round-headed gateway arch, entering the enclosed forecourt on the north-east front of the house, in which is set the main entrance. The forecourt is bounded to the south-west by the house, to the south-east by a service range and the screen range and gatehouse, and to the north-east by the garage yard, together with a late C20 accommodation block. A tall gateway in the garage yard wall gives access from the forecourt to the garage. To the north-west the forecourt opens out into a small courtyard with ornamental paving and a central flower bed in a former fountain basin. The courtyard, separated from the forecourt by a low stone wall with a central gateway, is bounded by the house and garage block to south-west and north-east respectively, and gives access to a flight of stone steps down to the north-west to the garden beyond, which it overlooks.

The south-west drive enters 175m south-west of the house, off the Ware to Babbs Green lane. The entrance is marked on the north side by a two-storey, roughcast lodge, with a prominent bowed extension overlooking the drive, and a pyramidal red-tiled roof (c 1900, probably W Wood Bethell). From here the drive extends north-east along the north side of the open approach lawn to the pond, where it joins the main drive.

Until c 1900 the public road followed the course of the south-west drive, extending north-east between a forecourt on the south-east front of the house (then much smaller) and two ponds to the south-east, continuing north-east along the perimeter of the estate (Dury and Andrews, 1766; OS 1880; 1921). The public road appears to have been moved to its present position at the time of the rebuilding of the house by W Wood Bethell for Richard Croft, when the gatehouse adjacent to the lane and the new south drive were built, together with the lodge and the gatehouse at the entrance to the forecourt. The public road was taken over as the south-west drive running between the house and newly created oval pond (created from the two earlier ponds), and the main entrance to the house moved from the south-east to the north-east front with the new forecourt.

**PRINCIPAL BUILDING** Fanhams Hall (early C18, W Wood Bethell 1898- 1901, listed grade II\*) stands east of the centre of the site, situated on a terrace, overlooking the main garden to the north-west. The three-storey, Jacobean-style mansion was extended by W Wood Bethell, using roughcast and stone with red-tile roofs, transforming the modest early C18 and later core to a large country house. Bethell also erected a projecting hall range to the north. In the late C20 a wood, glass and concrete extension was added to the south-east front, filling in the garden space between the house and oval pond.

The garage block and associated North Lodge (W Wood Bethell c 1901, listed grade II) lie north-east of the forecourt, on the north-west side of the garage yard, reached from the forecourt via the gateway in the north-east wall. The buildings are of roughcast with stonework and steep roofs of red tile, in similar style to the gateways.

**GARDENS AND PLEASURE GROUNDS** The gardens extend south-west and north-west from the house. A garden door at the centre of the main, south-west front leads out to a stone-flagged terrace, beyond which lies a level lawn with a large, central horse chestnut tree. From the south-east end of the terrace a path leads past the oval pond to the south-west drive. The lawn is bounded to the south-east and south-west by brick walls. A gateway flanked by brick piers leads through the south-west wall from the lawn to a small enclosure. In the south-west wall of this enclosure, 50m from the house, stands a further gateway, flanked by stone piers supporting iron gates, leading out of the garden to the south-west drive.

North-west of the main lawn lies a sunken garden. It is entered from the north-west side of the lawn via a brick and stone archway. The trapezoidal sunken garden is bounded to the north-east by a brick wall, at the north-west end of which a gateway

is flanked by stone piers supporting iron gates, with curved stone steps leading up to the north terrace. The sunken garden is laid out with a cruciform pattern of brick paths dividing panels of lawn, and enclosed by a perimeter brick path, with clipped yew hedges along the south-west and north-west sides.

The north-west terrace (W Wood Bethell c 1901, listed grade II) is partly enclosed by the hall range and north-west front of the house. Two panels of lawn, formerly (Architectural Review 1905) laid out with a geometrical pattern of borders, are divided by a stone path leading north-west from the stone terrace on the south-west front of the house, and enclosed by broad, stone-flagged paths. The north-west side of the terrace overlooks a parterre beyond, from which it is separated by a retaining wall on which stands a stone balustrade. A central flight of stone steps leads down from the terrace to the formal, rectangular parterre, laid out with concentric rectangles of borders, gravel paths and panels of lawn, enclosing a rectangular pond (W Wood Bethell c 1901, restored 1990s, listed grade II). West of the parterre, on higher ground, lies the croquet lawn, the two being separated by a clipped yew hedge. A large *Arbutus unedo* stands at the east edge of the croquet lawn.

A stone path runs along the south-east side of the parterre, below the terrace retaining wall. The path leads north-east between clipped yew pillars into a further compartment overlooked by the north-west end of the hall wing of the house. This area is dominated by a putting green, formerly (Architectural Review 1905) a bowling green, bounded to the north-east by a gravel path and yew hedge, the parterre and putting green compartments being separated by a yew hedge. A flight of curved stone steps south-east of the putting green ascends to the paved courtyard and forecourt beyond.

At the centre of the north-west side of the parterre a gateway provides access to the remainder of the garden, laid largely to level, informal lawns, planted with specimen trees and surrounded by further mature trees. The north-west side of this area is given over to the Japanese Garden of c 1901-5. The approach to the Japanese Garden is via a wooden pergola entered c 80m north-west of the house, close to a group of Scots pines. From here the pergola curves in serpentine fashion north-west, overlooking to the west the open lawns planted with exotic specimen trees (including a group of three *Catalpa* sp, several Atlantic blue cedars, *Robinia* sp and walnut) and to the east the rock-strewn lawns of the Japanese Garden and the southern end of a pond crossed by several wooden bridges. The pond is surrounded at its southern end by an arrangement of rocks set into an artificial mound. The pergola terminates 200m north-west of the house, close to the Japanese House (1900, listed grade II), a genuine Japanese tea house erected under Japanese direction. It is called 'Sei-Shin-tei' ( House of the Pure Heart) and was intended to provide a retreat from the main house. The two-storey, timber-framed and weatherboarded house has a red pantile roof and verandahs surrounding both floors. It stands close to the north end of the pond, and from here various paths lead to other parts of the informal garden. At its north end the pond terminates close to a second irregular pond running from south-west to north-east, crossed close to the centre by the Japanese grey granite Zig-Zag Bridge (1901-5, listed grade II), a small bridge of offset rectangular slabs set on rough stone abutments. Close to the north-east end of the second pond stands the Small House (1901-5, listed grade II), a small, single-storey timber structure raised on stone pads on a mound, with an overhanging roof. This was built to represent a Shinto shrine (the Fox Shrine 'Azuma-Inari') and was originally thatched.

West of the Japanese House lies a larger lake, surrounded by a path and crossed centrally by the single-span, timber Green Bridge (1901-5, rebuilt late C20, listed grade II), standing 240m north-west of the house. The bridge carries a path south from the north side of the lake to the open lawns beyond, through which the path continues in serpentine fashion, eventually leading back to the parterre. A further path leads south-west from the south side of the Green Bridge through mature trees on the south-west boundary of the garden, rejoining the southern path close to the parterre. On the north side of the lake stands the Austrian House (c 1901, listed grade II), which was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition of 1900 and subsequently obtained by Richard Page Croft, who re-erected it on this site. Set amongst mature trees, it is timber-framed with timber infill, of one and a half storeys, and overlooks the lake to the south and open countryside to the north.

The lakes are surrounded by luxuriant vegetation and many unusual varieties of plants. Many mature Japanese maple specimens are distributed throughout the Japanese garden.

#### REFERENCES

Architectural Review 18, (December 1905), pp 269-77 B Cherry and N Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: Hertfordshire* (1977), p 382 R Bisgrove, *The Gardens of Britain* 3, (1978), pp 74/5 D Ottewill, *Edwardian Gardens* (1989), pp 56, 207, 221

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Maps A Survey of Fanham Hall ferme near Ware ... belonging to Mr John Evans ..., 1716 (Hertfordshire Record Office) Dury and Andrews, A topographical Map of Hartford-shire, 1766

OS 6" to 1 mile: 1st edition surveyed 1878/9, published 1881-3 2nd edition published 1899 OS 25" to 1 mile: 1st edition published 1880 2nd edition published 1898 3rd edition published 1921

Description written: August 1999 Register Inspector: SR Edited: October 2000

## Legal

This garden or other land is registered under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 within the Register of Historic Parks and Gardens by Historic England for its special historic interest.